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संस्कृत और उद्योग
में स्त्रियों की भूमिका

PANOM RUNG SHRINE OF THAILAND

Satya Vrat Shastri, Delhi

Prasad Panom Rung, a sanctuary of the Lopburi period, is situated in the district of Nangrong, in the Buriram Province of Thailand. Built on the hill of Panom Rung, it derives its name from it. The hill is at present accessible by a well-metalled road. The front of the sanctuary faces the east. Four terraces of steps lead up to it, each step being 22 metres wide. Further to them is a quadrangular space. To the north of the space is an elephant enclosure. Built of sandstone and laterite it faces the south, and has two porches, one to the east and the other to the west, each 6.4 metres wide and 22.4 metres long. The front of the porch has a terrace. There are galleries on three sides. The passage within each gallery is 4.35 metres wide. There are three staircases on three sides. The structure might also originally have been a sanctuary, judging from the motif carved on the stone block, something that can be used for dating. There is a carving depicting *kāla* with hands emitting two five-hooded *Nāgas*. Behind the hoods of the *Nāgas* are haloes which are unconnected. Behind these haloes is ornamentation. If we compare this motif with the Khmer Art we find it that of the Kleangs style (circa 957-1007 A.D.). From this, the structure can be dated back to 10th century A.D. There is in addition a piece of quadrangular stone pillar which shows that the structure was renovated later. On this pillar are the bead-like lotus petal motifs. But the most important motif is on top of the said pillar. It is in the shape of a flower with four petals. This is very similar to the Khmer art of Bayon style of about 1157-1207 A.D. From this one can say that the eastern corner of the structure was reconstructed in the 12th century A.D. About 50 metres to the west of it are three ponds that are used till today.

The Main Building

1. *The remains of two prangs (=towers) made of brick*

They were discovered through excavation not long back. They are situated on the north-eastern corner within the galleries. One is quadrangular and faces the south. There must have existed a third Prang also which would have had its location on the opposite side of the one facing the south. It should have faced the north. It must have been removed before the construction of the big Prang. If we consider the motifs on the frame of the door that are still visible near the Prang that faces the east, these Prangs might have been constructed in the 10th century A.D., the period of the Khmer Art of Bakheng period, because of the motif of big leaves and the octagonal pillar. There is one full leaf and two half leaves on each side. There is also a ring shape motif at the corner of each side. The dating of these Prangs in 10th century A.D. is also supported by the two figures unearthed within the main Prang. The figures are of two goddesses, with heads and hands broken. Their lower garment is pleated, with its front part folded into a curve. This is very similar to the Khmer Art of Kohker period, i.e. 957-1007 A. D.

One of these goddesses is Brahmī, i.e. female Brahmā. She has four heads and is sitting with right knee raised and hands folded. The lower garment is similar to that of the other goddess described above, which is a characteristic of the art of the 10th-11th centuries A.D. The date of the three Prangs is indicated by the motif of the door frame and by the figures of the two goddesses.

2. *Small Prang in the South-western Direction within the Gallery*

This is quadrangular with indented corner. Each side is six metres wide. The outer part of the building is made of sandstone and the inner part of laterite. Considering the motif on the lintel and the gable, these Prangs should have been built in the middle of the 10th century A. D. There is a hint of Khmer Art of Kleangs period (957-1007 A.D.); e.g. the lintel on the front has a figure of *kāla* with its rectangular

tongue protruding. *Kāla* is shown emitting garlands held by it with its hands. Above this is shown within a frame someone with one knee raised. Below the garlands are motifs in the shape of leaves, both upside down and upside up. Each part of the lintel is divided by a hanging garland which in itself is divided into parts according to the parts of the lintel, a characteristic of Kleangs style. The gable above the lintel is similar to the gable in the Baphuan style, i.e., *kāla* emitting garlands is not to be found and the Nāgas are without decoration on the head.

The lintel in the South has the same characteristics, i.e., it is similar to the lintel of the Khmer style of the Kleang's period combined with the Baphuan style. From this it can be said that the Prang belonged to about the 11th century A.D.

The Main Prang

It is rectangular in shape and the entrance to it is from the east. There are porches in the four directions. The shrine has a number of interesting stone carvings. The gable on the porch in the eastern side has a massive figure of Natarāja, with exquisite floral decorative carvings around. Behind the gable described above is another gable which has certain figures. On the southern side of it is a figure of a *Ṛṣi* in a happy mood with the right knee flat and the left raised. A rosary towards his left side is clear. Next to the *Ṛṣi* towards the left is some figure which being highly broken is not identifiable. After it is depicted a lady under a tree with two monkeys. Next to the lady is a figure of a human being with head missing. A hand of the human being appears to hold something looking like the beak of a bird. The scene could well be that of Jaṭāyu's fight with Rāvaṇa at Sītā's abduction. Further to that also is something which being highly broken is not identifiable. In the northern side a lintel has scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*; in the upper part it depicts the abduction of Sītā, in the lower part towards the right hand side the killing of Mārīca shown in the form of deer and towards the left hand side something which has yet to be precisely identified. The figures there are those of a man with a bow in a posture of shooting, a pillar and most probably a bird the front part of

which is broken. Originally it was thought that the scene carved is that of the lifting of bow by Rāma at the Sītā *svayamvara*, but opinion changed later and it was thought that the carving represents some other scene, for the figure is not shown in the posture of lifting the bow but in that of shooting an arrow. Prince Subhadradit floated the theory that it might be representing some such scene from the *Mahābhārata* as Arjuna's shooting a target at the time of the Draupadī *svayamvara*, though he himself points out that the target in that episode was fish and not bird. His theory, though ingenious, is hard to accept. It is inconceivable that one lintel will have two scenes, one from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the other from the *Mahābhārata*. There is an unsaid rule of coherence which would restrict this kind of mixing up. The natural presumption would be that the lintel carries all the scenes from one story, from that of Rāma. What then could this scene be? More likely it is that it represents what goes in India by the name of *dhanurbhaṅga* at Sītā *svayamvara*. In Thai version Rāma is represented as taking up the bow and putting the string on it. May be in some other version shooting is shown and the carving may be representing that.

On the southern side at the top is again carved the scene of the abduction of Sītā. Below is shown the scene of the return of Rāma to Ayodhyā as can be guessed from the musicians preceding him. Rāma is shown on horse-back. He is also followed by some people. On one side of this carving at some distance is depicted the fighting scene.

The back-side porch gable has three types of carvings one below the other. The first depicts human heads in a semicircular way. The one below that shows a row of monkey heads. The one still below that depicts the scene of the bringing of Indrajit's head to Mandodarī in her palace who is shown with her head tucked under her hand. Below this are shown some monkeys apparently happy at the consummation. On the right side are depicted two monkeys with opposite faces whose significance is not clear. On top of Mandodarī's palace are shown two parrots, probably a decorative motif. Inside the sanctuary, at the back of the porch from the back side, is

depicted the scene of a figure, head broken, tearing a person into two. For a time it had been thought that the carving represented the scene of Viṣṇu in his incarnation of Man-lion tearing the demon Hiranyakāśipu but a closer scrutiny has led to the view that it represents instead the scene of Kṛṣṇa tearing Kāṁsa. Similar carvings have been discovered from Cambodia where the figure tearing a person, unmistakably, is Kṛṣṇa.

On the four layers of the gable on the porch of the eastern section of the main Prang towards the south, there are different carvings. On the first layer is a clear figure of a bull and a god, the figure of god indistinct, only leg visible; riding on it in a procession. Only the legs of the members in the procession are visible, the bodies having become indistinct. What is distinct is a number of banners signifying probably the royal nature of the procession. On the second is the figure of a *Rṣi*. On the third is the scene of fighting among three persons, the middle one, with face indistinct, being of bigger size. The side figures, extremely distinct luckily, have knots at the head suggesting that the carving might be depicting the scene of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa fighting Rāvaṇa or some other powerful demon.

The porch between the eastern and the western sections towards the south has a carved lintel and a gable. The carving on the lintel depicts towards the left elephants with riders, towards the middle a human figure only the lower part of which is now visible (in the posture of one knee flat and one raised), towards the right some figures which are now indistinct. The gable has two figures, one clearer than the other. On top of these is a figure noticeable by the flat leg and the belly upto the navel. It looks the two figures below are carrying the person represented by the figure up.

Below both sides of the door have a figure each of a *Rṣi* sitting cross-legged, with knees raised and hands joining the chin in a reflective mood.

The eastern section of the Prang towards the south has three gables. On the first only the figure of a *Rṣi*, each on both sides, is seen. In between the *Rṣis* are two figures broken

and indistinct. Upwards of the *R̥sis* is a figure in *Mahārājalilā* posture (one leg hanging from the seat and the other flat). On both sides of this are shown ladies carrying some things that look like fans.

The second gable has a big figure of a demon carrying a woman in his left hand and a spear in the right one. He is shown standing with both legs wide apart. On both sides of the figure are depicted figures, one on each side, of princes. On the third gable is shown the procession of the monkey army towards the left and the human army towards the right in opposite directions. In the human army only one man is depicted riding a horse and the rest are shown walking on foot. The same is the case with the monkey army. There too only one monkey is shown riding a horse while the rest are depicted walking on foot.

Western gable of the western section of the main Prang has four layers. The first and the second layers depict nothing. The third layer has three figures under a tree, two on both sides carrying a bow, who could be *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa*. The middle one looking like a lady could be *Sītā*. On the fourth gable is depicted a palace scene which is difficult to specify.

The western section of the main Prang towards the north has four gables. The first has figures with bows. Also noticeable in it are royal insignias like banners, depicting probably the scene of the return of *Rāma*, *Lakṣmaṇa* and *Sītā* to *Ayodhyā*. The third has the figure of a person flourishing a sword. Below them are a number of monkeys flying about with one figure, probably that of a chieftain of them a *Vānara-rāja*, seated in the middle. Nothing is depicted on the second, while the fourth carries a big figure trying to drag something to it. There is a small figure also which looks terrified.

Eastern section on the northern side has four gables, the first one of which depicts the scene of the fight between demons and monkeys. The second one depicts something which is difficult to specify at the moment, because what is left of it is only two figures. The third gable has one big massive figure which is unidentifiable. The fourth gable is not clear.

On the eastern side the inside of the first room has some carvings on the lintel. A crocodile could be marked here on the Śeṣa bed on the ocean.

In between the eastern and western sections a lintel has figures of *Rṣis* with hands folded and knees raised in a cross-legged posture.

The western section porch towards the south has an inside lintel which has a figure, looking like that of a *Rṣi*, in the middle flanked by figures, looking like those of princes, on both sides. The middle figure could be that of king Narendrāditya. The second part of the inside lintel has five figures, all of them of *Rṣis*.

First room from back side and the room in the southern side have a panel each at the top which depict the scene of five *Rṣis* sitting cross-legged, knees raised and hands folded in a posture of prayer; in the room in the southern side the scene is slightly different from the panel in the room just behind the porch; in that an arrow is pointed at a bird which is turning for support on a pillar. The dress of the figure in the carving is of the style of the late Baphuan period (about 1057-1107 A.D.).

The *Rṣi* in the middle holds a rosary in his hand. His figure is a little bigger and is in a frame as compared with the two *Rṣis* each flanked on either side of him. This carving may have been done according to the inscription found at the shrine long back. That inscription mentions king Sūryavarmān II who is the builder of Angkorvat. It also says that one Hiranya built a golden statue of his father Narendrāditya who was a Yogin meditating in a cave. It was Hiranya who probably was the person who made the inscription and built the main Prang in dedication to his father. The *Rṣi* in the middle holding the rosary might suggest Īśvara or Narendrāditya, Prasad Panom Rung being certainly a Śaiva sanctuary because the inscriptions found there start with the salutation to Īśvara, Śiva, though the carving on the lintel on the other part of the Prang depicts the incarnation of Nārāyaṇa which fact is not important in determining whether a particular sanctuary is Śaiva or a Vaiṣṇava one. This depends on the inner lintel. In the Prasad Hin Pimai, the innermost lintel depicts a scene

from Mahāyāna Buddhism while the the outer lintel depicts a scene from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The inscriptions which were found at the time when the excavation was carried out here before the reconstruction of the sanctuary have been deciphered now and one of them even published. As for the gallery encircling this Prang, it might have been built in the same period. There are gates in it in four directions. The front gate is to the east. One cannot but mark the fact that the gallery to the east, south and west of the shrine is of sandstone while to the north it is of laterite. Many of the sculptures of the late Baphuan style have been found in the sanctuary, the important ones being the sculptures of the gods of directions. Only one face is of sandstone and other sides are empty (i.e. stone is carved only on one side, the other three sides are empty). Till now the sculptures of six gods of directions have been found. It is for the first time that one finds such deities in Lop-buri period carved in separate stone. It is unfortunate that one did not find the original place of these deities. May be they were placed on the pillar in the open air according to the direction they guard and the oblation might have been put on the blooming lotuses carved on the pillars on which they stand. Those pillars, however, have not been found. It is possible that they were made of wood and may have decayed in course of time. Those deities are as follows : (1) *Indra on elephant*. The guardian of the eastern direction, he wears *uṣṇīṣa*, *mukuta*, a necklace and an armlet and holds *vajra*. The necklace is decorated with a small garland. This shows the turning point from the late Baphuan style to the Angkorvat style which might have come about in 12th century A.D. Thus we put forward the conjecture that this statue belongs to the late Baphuan period. Here the Airāvata has only one head and it is like an ordinary elephant. It wears necklace and bell. The elephant is using its trunk to drag something looking like a lotus stalk. The whole figure is within a frame. This has been found in the southeastern side of the main Prang. (2) *Agni on Rhinoceros*. The guardian of southeastern direction, Agni mounted on rhinoceros is typically Khmer. Later it became typically Thai. The Indian one

is on a goat. His dress is similar to that of Indra. He may hold a banner in his hand. The rhinoceros may wear a necklace and bell. This statue is found on the south-eastern corner of the main Prang. (3) *Varuṇa on fivehooded Nāga*. The guardian of the western direction, Varuṇa is generally shown on *haṁsa* but as the god of rain he is shown riding a *Nāga* (the giver of rain) as well. His dress is similar to that of Indra and Agni. The only addition to that is a pair of anklets that he is made to wear. His dress is that of the late Baphuan style, i.e. between 1057-1107 A.D. The halo of the *Nāga* is made of one piece, a characteristic of the beginning of the Angkorvat period, i.e. about the middle of 17th century A.D. Varuṇa is shown sitting in *Rājālīlā* posture i.e. the right leg raised and the left placed horizontally. The weapon that he holds in his hand is *pāśa*, noose, which has broken away. This statue has been found in the south-western direction of the main Prang. (4) *Kubera on lion*. The guardian of the northern direction, Kubera is generally shown riding a *Yakṣa* shown with a club in his hand. He may sometimes ride a lion. The dress and the sitting posture of Kubera at Panom Rung are the same as that of Varuṇa. The lion is highly influenced by the Chinese Makara, e.g., the beard and the nose are long like the trunk of an elephant. The legs are more like the legs of birds than of four-footed animals. The hand of Kubera is holding something which may be a noose of snake. This statue is found in the western side of the main Prang. (5) *Īśāna on bull*. The guardian of north-western direction, Īśāna is a part of Śiva. He holds a *Trīśūla* in his hand and rides on bull like him. He is shown sitting in the *Lalitāsana* posture, i.e., the right leg hangs down and the left leg is placed horizontally. The dress is the same as that of the gods described above. This statue is found near the corner on the north-western side of the main Prang. (6) *Brahmā on three haṁsas*. Sitting in *Mahārājālīlā* posture with two hands in one of which he holds a lotus, he at first gives the appearance of Varuṇa, as the latter (Varuṇa) also rides on *haṁsa*, but the four faces of his make him to be Brahmā. This statue is found near the northern gate at the gallery. Brahmā is the guardian of the upper direction.

As for the lotuses carved on top of the stone they are of the same shape, i.e., the whole blooming lotus is visible, the pollen is seen in round shape in the middle encircled by eight big petals with eight small petals intermittently. Each lotus is encircled by a bead-like motif. At the four corners are motifs of flowers distinctly carved. These flowers are framed by bead-like motif. The oblation might have been placed on top of the lotuses. Apart from the statues of these guardians of the quarters are also found the statues of the vehicles of deities, e.g., bull, elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros, and swan. The deities on the vehicles were made of bronze and have long disappeared. Only the bronze latch remains. These vehicles are found within and without the main Prang. Therefore, it is difficult to say as to where their original places were. Apart from these vehicles are also found the statues of *Dvārapālas* which belong to the late Baphuan period with the reason described above. The main Prang, the gallery around it and these statues might have been built in the middle of the 12th century A.D., the turning point from Baphuan to Angkorvat.

Now a word about the *Nāga* bridge and the steps in front of the sanctuary in the east. It bears the characteristic of Khmer art of the beginning of the Angkorvat period (1107-1132 A.D.) i.e. on the ground there is a road paved with sandstone towards the *Nāga* bridge which is seven metres wide and sixteen metres long. Along both sides of the road are quadrangular pillars with unblown lotus shape at the top put into a row. Beyond this road is a *Nāga* bridge made into a cross. It is 5.2 metres wide and 20 metres long with three steps. The trail of the bridge is made in the shape of a five-hooded *Nāga*. The tops of the *Nāgas* are beautifully carved. So is the support of the bridge. The halo of the *Nāga* is made into one piece. The rim of the halo is a little indented continuously. From this it appears that the bridge might have been built in the beginning of the Angkor period which is contemporaneous with Prasad Bung Mala in Cambodia. Beyond the bridge are the stone-steps, 13 metres wide and 30 metres long with five terraces. These steps lead to an open space in front of the sanctuary. On both sides of the steps are four quadrangular bases.

There are two Vihāras of laterite near the main Prang. One of these facing the south at the north-eastern corner is 4.50 metres wide and 8.80 metres long, while the other facing the west at the south-eastern corner is 9.5 metres wide and 7.6 metres long. The Vihāras must have been built in the reign of king Jayavarman VII, the last great king of the Khmer empire in Bayon period (about 1057—1107 A.D.). The support to this view is lent by the statues of two goddesses found in the eastern porch of the main Prang. These two statues must have been placed on the same base, a rectangular one, with two holes for the statues, and a water passage in front. The identity of the goddesses is difficult to determine, because the thing that they hold in their hands has broken away.

From what has been said above, it would appear that Prasad Panom Rung had begun to be built in about the 10th century A.D. Additons were continued to be made to it from time to time till the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th century A.D. It was an important sanctuary lying on the route from Angkorvat in Khmer empire to the region around Prasad Muangtam which might have been thickly populated, judging from the pond which is found near it till today.

